

Costa Rica

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A Commentary on Trying Something New

There's something to be said for packing to go to another country. And there is something to be said for consumerism. Consumerism, for example, is a tricky subject in my mind. If you move from country to country, for richer or poorer, the effects seem to remain the same. There's always something you want. So why, on Earth, do people rush to buy buy buy?

And, what, does consumerism have to do with packing to go abroad? At the mall today in San José, Costa Rica, I continued a search I had begun the day I arrived here: To find somewhere, anywhere, that sold Proactive facial cleanser, an essential which I had forgotten in the States. "I cannot believe that they do not have Proactiv here!" I thought, "don't they know anything!"

And thus consumerism crossed with frustration and misunderstanding of a young and inexperienced packer creates:

Ah, ethnocentrism.

You see, past the euphoric primary stage after arrival abroad, we tend to see the differences between the new country and that of our own; why the other culture is inferior; why we miss our home. Or, at least, I did at any rate.

So as I searched, disgusted, for Proactiv, but to no avail, I realized just how dangerous a few thoughts of the other country's inferiority can be. Granted, it is every young woman's nightmare to develop a face of stress-related "I-just-left-home-and-I'm-trying-my-best-to-transition" pimples. And let's face it. No charming Costa Rican hombre is going to dance the Meringue with Pimple Girl over Miss "I Remembered to Pack My Proactiv When I Left the United States." We begin to think, "If Costa Rica was as good as the United States, I would be in possession of Proactiv facial cleanser right now, and I would be dancing the Meringue with that guy over there."

And thus the difficult transition overthrows the player and wins. A red flag should have gone up right about here. If we only keep our minds focused on the "bad" things that are different, we cannot fully appreciate the good differences. How do we know that Costa



Rica doesn't have a better facial cleanser than Proactiv? The fact is, we do not know. If we do not accept the culture at hand, then we do not learn.

Amongst the expectations of what Costa Rica SHOULD have available to be readily consumed by the population, I learned this. One does not leave home to find the same thing, like Proactiv, for example. Because if the new place were the same, traveling there would not be an adventure. And sometimes the experience is well worth the wait if we just have the patience. But we have to be willing to try something new, before it gets better. So the lesson learned, and metaphorically speaking, in words particularly understandable for the overbearing population of women back home:

Though sometimes we have to first deal with breakouts before we can move on from what we are used to, the clean fresh face we get in the end is well worth the work of trying to find a new facial cleanser.